

Estuary Players

www.topshamestuaryplayers.org.uk

NEWSLETTER SEPTEMBER 2011

Here we are again, that exciting time, full of anticipation as the company begin rehearsals for our November production, (8th – 11th Nov). A bold, ambitious choice, which will give every member the opportunity to participate, whether on stage, backstage, production team or front of house. A real ensemble piece!

The Threepenny Opera'

Ian Potts (Director) and **Ben Beeson** (Musical Director)

Following very enjoyable audition evening and subsequent individual auditions, Ian and Ben have brought together a strong cast -

Street Singer	Bill Pattinson	
Mr Peachum	Alan Caig	
Mrs Peachum	Maggie Bourgein	
Filch	Tilly Webster	
Polly	Josie Kemp	
Macheath	Cameron Lemmer	
Low Dive Jenny	Angela Wallwork	
Rev Kimball	Gordon Halliday	
Tiger Brown	Anthony Morris	
Lucy Brown	Kate Wannell	
Smith	Rob Hole	
Mack's Gang	Ready Money Matt	Wallace Parfitt
	Crook Finger Jake	Keith Palmer
	Bob the Saw	Maggie Butt
	Walt Dreary	David Batty
Whores	Dolly	Daisy Domville-Musters
	Molly	Avril Pattinson

Betty
Coaxer

Victoria Jones
Rose Gander

Chorus Beggars/Whores The more the merrier!

To date:

Rosemary Whitehurst

Cally Petit

Cass Thorne

Anny Kilbourne

Ali Marsh

Director's notes from Ian:

Rehearsals are well underway for our new production of Brecht's, 'The Threepenny Opera' which is an exciting challenge for the company. Based on John Gay's eighteenth century 'Beggar's Opera,' but with Brecht's more overt critique of bourgeois capitalism, 'The Threepenny Opera' has proved to be his most performed and most successful play. Gay's, 'Beggars Opera' set out to ridicule the taste for Italian Opera, which was at its height in London in 1728, whereas Brecht's target was a capitalist society, which allows the oppression of the poor. According to Brecht, the idea underlying 'The Threepenny Opera,' was 'Criminals are bourgeois: are bourgeois criminals?'

Brecht's Epic Theatre was part of a wider Modernist movement in all the arts, and was reacting against the dominant naturalism of the European theatre after Ibsen. The drama he recommends presents a view of the world in which the spectator confronts something, is made to study what she sees and awaken her capacity to act. As a Marxist he wishes to challenge the idea of a human being being unalterable, arguing that a human being is alterable and able to alter, in the same way that certain social conditions, including poverty, are not inevitable, but the product of a certain economic structure that can be changed. Brecht does criticize the criminal underworld in the play but, 'a bourgeois society which allows there to be an underworld at all.' For Brecht, 'every beggar is a monstrosity and the audience must be appalled by its own complicity in such poverty and wretchedness. For Brecht, like Marx, social being determines thought, rather than

thought determining being. In terms of reception, the insistence that the audience develop a different attitude was at the core of Brechtian theory.

In order to destroy the illusion of Naturalism and arouse in the audience a capacity to act, Brecht employed various distancing mechanisms in Epic Theatre such as the use of projection to announce what happens in each scene, the use of 2D backdrops that comment on the action, non-sequential action and the use of music and song to interrupt rather than complement the action. Characters are types rather than individuals, gesture is larger than life and the Brechtian style of acting, is acting in quotation marks. The actor does not impersonate the character, so much as narrate the actions of another person at a definite time in the past. It is the opposite of the introspective Stanislavskyan acting methodology which focuses on the inner life of the character. For Brecht the emphasis is on the way the characters behave towards one another and the capacity for change and social action.

Neither 'The Beggars Opera' nor 'The Threepenny Opera' are operas in the traditional sense, indeed Brecht was contemptuous of conventional opera which he thought draws the audience in to its emotion in an uncritical fashion. For Brecht music must take an attitude and strike a position. In Kurt Weill Brecht found a classically trained avant-garde musician who at the time they met was moving towards an appreciation of more socially aware art forms. Weill's ironic, jazzy, contrapuntal style comments on, interrupts and at times disrupts the action rather than complementing it, thus highlighting the contradictions within the structure of the play. The singer's aim was not so much to bring out the emotional content of the song, but, 'to strike a gesture.'

It is our intention to include as many of the company as possible, so if you didn't attend the auditions, but would still like to be involved in the ensemble elements of the production, **please come along to our rehearsal on Tuesday 6th Sept.**

As always, you are always welcome at any of the rehearsals – it's good to have an 'audience' – it keeps everyone 'on their toes'!

best wishes

Avril - Sept 1st 2011